outposts

No. 4

EDITED BY
HOWARD SERGEANT

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G. A. WAGNER
HUGO MANNING
NICHOLAS MOORE
HOWARD SERGEANT
MURIEL GRAINGER
JOHN BAYLISS
WRENNE JARMAN
PETER NOBLE
Notices

WALFORD MORGAN
PETER RATAZZI
C. BUSBY SMITH
A. R. CURZON-HOWE
PATRIC STEVENSON
KEN ETHERIDGE
ANTONY BORROW
WILFRED H. BARTLETT
HARDIMAN SCOTT
Press Comments

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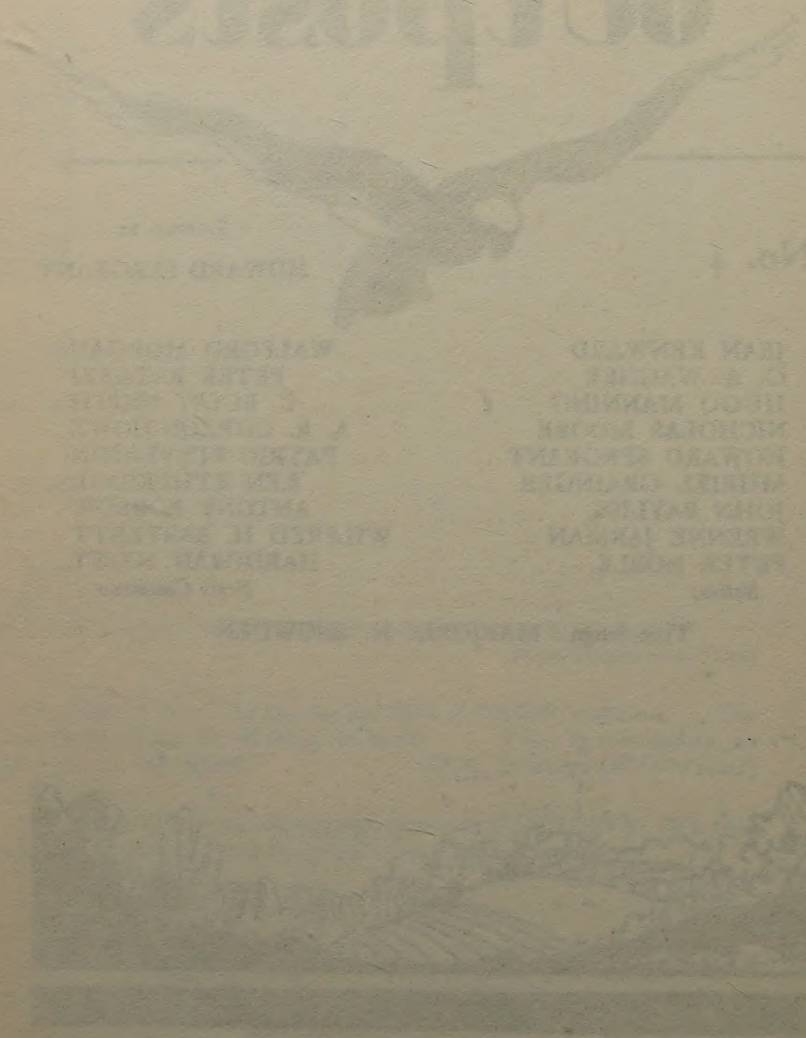

FOOL'S SONG

JEAN KENWARD

NOT in the tumbled artifice of cities
Were his loose limbs, his lovely lip engendered,
But where the blackbird primed his April ditties
And delicately to his true love tendered
Morsels of seed and olive warily
Wrapped in an evening and as frail as light.
There the mild arms of meadows merrily
Made him their burden, and the incredible night
Fed him and swaddled him in little stars.
Who then shall mock at his fidelity,
Dubbing him wastrel and a man of dreams?
He has the prophets' old temerity
And walks with angels whose fair vision seems
So bright, so hot, so powerful, he knows
No sleep but in the shadow of the rose.

POEM ON RETURNING

G. A. WAGNER

NOW that it is a quiet night of stars
Open your flower in me and pierce
With your fingers like spars of light this fierce
Moment of return. Remember and breathe
On the tree of my love and I will move
To your side in miraculous prayers.

For these are the times that I am needing
You most, when it is clear there is no more
Dying to be done, and I am back, dear,
Safe out of the sun, and oh now there is
Nothing more urgent than our furious lips
Like mad insects meeting, our mouths fighting.

NOCTURNE

HUGO MANNING

COME shadows, come drummers in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square.
Come the drugged performers and the sextet of dancers,
In the milk of moonbeams, under the limelight's stare,
In the cellar for schemers, at the table for six,
Come shadows, come drummers everywhere.

Unrest :

I am the punctual prologue in your narrative of change,
The serpent in your blood, the knocking in your womb.
I am the hungry worm in the tissues of your torpor,
The knife of your desires, the clock in your room.
I am the savage incendiary feeding the flambeaus of your breast,
Your salesman of inquietude, your troublesome guest.

Come whispers, come voices in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square.
Come the drugged performers and the quintet of dancers,
In the milk of moonbeams, under the limelight's stare.
In the cellar for schemers, at the table for five,
Come whispers, come voices everywhere.

Rumour :

I am a weeping sea in your winter's tidings,
Washing your shore with the waves of fear.
I am yesterday's tomorrow in your daily quicksands,
The lightning messenger wooing the eye of your ear.
I am the parrot of your tongue telling of your tempestuous part;
The vision in your crystal, the foreboding in your heart.

Come announcers, come riders in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square
Come the drugged performers and the quartet of dancers,
In the milk of moonbeams, under the limelight's stare.
In the cellar for schemers, at the table for four,
Come announcers, come riders everywhere.

Conflict :

I am your startling climax and your cancerous chorus,
Your architect of nightmare, your gladiatorial ring.
I am your waiting frontier, fabulous as fantasy
Your unhappy crossroads, there crowned as king ;
Domain without outlet and dynasty without end ;
I am your torturer plateau at the treacherous bend.

Come headsmen, come hangmen in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square.
Come the drugged performers and the trio of dancers,
In the milk of moonbeams, under the limelight's stare.
In the cellar for schemers, at the table for three,
Come headsmen, come hangmen everywhere.

Murder :

I am the hated lovebird of your lethal delight,
The prisoner on parole from your tower of terror.
I am the neglected tumour by your ticking heart,
Your renascent dragon, your ancestral error.
I come, I come on the ship of your need,
For I am the answer and I am the deed.

Come the lean, come the barren in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square.
Come the drugged performers and the duet of dancers,
In the milk of moonbeams, under the limelight's stare.
In the cellar for schemers, at the table for two,
Come the lean, come the barren everywhere.

Famine :

I am the staring emptiness in your temples and fields,
Your harvest of barrenness, your breastless mother.
I am the unlistening end in your cycle of plagues,
Your prowling raider, your awakening horror.
I come, I come through the wastes and the deserts,
For I am your dust and your revengeful robber.

Come the hopeless, come the hollow in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square.
Come the drugged performers and the solo dancer,
In the milk of moonbeams, under the limelight's stare.
In the cellar for schemers, at the table for one,
Come the hopeless, come the hollow everywhere.

Disillusion :

I am the broken promise haunting the streets of your dreams,
Your unfulfilment's unfulfilment in the web of frustrations.
I am your hope plucked out like the irreparable tooth,
The empty bottle in your wine of illusions.
I am your broken lamp and your still-born way,
I am your dead-end weaver among the dregs of your day.

Come healers, come builders in the blood-filled air,
On the rim of the hill, by the fountain in the square.
Come the wishful watchers, come the yawning dreamers,
Through the night-shift's passing as patient as prayer.
Among the empty glasses, under the limelight's stare,
Come healers, come builders everywhere.

TWO POLITICAL POEMS

NICHOLAS MOORE

1. The Impossible Hero

O THE impossible hero
Enlarges himself from the people,
Growing enormous and O
More and more incapable.

And as his image expands
Grossly into its fat
World, there is blood on his hands
And no end to that

Ridiculous destruction.
Marx knew, even Owen guessed
The logical end of reaction—
Live man or autophagous beast.

2. The Natural Form

THE illiterate and lonely
who earlier combined
Against necessity only,
The blind who were not blind

Enough for complete deception,
And from their certain need
Outlined the future's action,
Planted there like a seed

In the English earth a plant
That would flower in a new society.
Thus from this ancient want
Grows our imagined city,

Brilliant with light for all
And Time with its stone arm
Is powerless to appal
The future's natural form.

RIDING THE SOFT CONTOURS . . .

HOWARD SERGEANT

RIDING the soft contours of October, here
sanderlings raid the ribbed upon yellow shore,
not as the ebbtime feeders, slow towards drifters,
but they, faring rod-reckless in no-fear-with-it haste,
allhazard their quickhallowed candles, white laughter's
lilt on a welter of tide unleashed. Almost
thigh-deep there, how they highwatering wade, how goad
to a grimness, a threshing of foamflesh and fingers
the sea ! Or deftly, what feather-forestalling of anger
and reaving of hope from the O-proud-scimitar god !

Birdlikewise, we prize pebbled-with-pastel havens
in the shallows, indriven by waveblind events.
And eyes swung heavenwards harness no Christhands
to dyke the time's dark testament of blood
crossflooding man's many of days, and the dead-end
cities. With merely my words and a bird
in my throat, I bring you sanderlings of
inspiration, viaticum to heart's delict.
Here find a purpose and willfire to act—
on the wounding fangs of the wave ; here, find love.

MUSIC AT MIDNIGHT

MURIEL GRAINGER

THERE is music that is not of the mind's own making,
Given at midnight to the simple singers
Stripped of all save their spirits' stillness.
They are those who have no more use for the harpsichord ;
For the narrow window with its pretty view ;
For the near geraniums that assault the eyes.
They have caught clear chords from a far-off kingdom
Whose pattern is wrought in an unknown tempo.
The new song waits with eternal patience
To be set in the mouths of the musicians at midnight.
But before the music, there is always the dark moment
With the poised baton, and the air pregnant with sound—
The prevenient echo, forerunner and fulfilment ;

The moment before the revealed annunciation,
When the spirit waits, and knows not why it is waiting,
Held in a brooding silence, a prelude of portent
Prior to release, the downward thrust, and the knowing.
The hour before midnight is full of terror and wonder,
And the sundering sense that still there is time to withdraw.

But afterwards, when there is no withdrawing,
But only a going forward into light,
When the small songs cease before the celestial singing,
And the live coal from the Spirit's glowing altar
Has seared the lips that learnt so much in silence,
The air is full of Hails and Hallelujahs,
And the song is of the day, and not the night.

SONNET

JOHN BAYLISS

FIRST Man is noble, young, improvident,
has honest disregard of life, of danger;
impenitent drinks love and high ideal,
on anger thinks himself omnipotent.
Then marries and begets, but does not feel
the same wild fervour of awakened sense,
fathers some child whose grave inconsequence
reminds him where his feathered fancies fail.

The ideal fades. The wife becomes too kind.
The disregard of danger also goes.
Fear grows and with it worse anxieties
until he runs to dreams left far behind;—
renews old friendships, tries again old loves
and finds all tasteless, apples without leaves.

PLASTIC AIRMAN

WRENNE JARMAN

HIS face is smooth as sculptured faces are,
his features fair enough to draw a girl's
arch backward glance, his disciplined blond curls
swept from a grafted brow without a scar.

But this young mottled face does not betray,
as other faces do, the moods behind—
if he has secrets, they are locked away :
he looks out at the world from a drawn blind
screening the man he was. And who was he ?
Only the grave eyes know, and do not tell . . .
Be gentle with him, World, who has foregone
his unique pattern, his identity :
be tender, lest the frozen mask should melt
abruptly, and surprise us with its scorn.

LEAR'S HEATH

PETER NOBLE

THE wind-blown heath and the serried stumps of oaks
Are solace for the ancient, withered king,
Grotesquely leering in the semi-darkness,
Pathetic shadow of once-regal splendour.

The spiteful howl of surging, stinging storm-blast,
Swift spit of rain, filling the sky with fire,
Bring visions to the king of unloved daughters,
Twin harridan satyrs, product of royal loins.

On this very heath stumbled the mad monarch,
Here the sky heard his sobbing, his demented eyes
Stupidly glazing raised themselves to heaven,
Somewhere above the blast-chipped chunks of hate.

Here stood the aged monarch ; and the hail
Blotted the black with knife-point tips of pain.
Here with his Fool he muttered, trembled,
Suffered him gladly, roused himself to war.

Such was the theme ; the time of war and glory,
Decade of blood, of father against son,
Plotting and intrigue, fear and assassination.
This heath saw death ; and buried here lost causes.

RED EQUINOX

WALFORD MORGAN

I HAVE spent so long over the fertile cries
of sleep
the dreams blossoming into rivers
and the roses walking from the pregnant
tombs into the sea,
my watchmen stalking unreasonably
a dark-skinned death in the city ;
that I am resolved to deny
all these with a season's exactitude,
warn off all words from the scream-
cry of the weathercock on the steeple,
the female odour (their waves of grass
an orange glow of fire) of love's dark plumage
at night ;
ring finally my tear-stained wife who
lets the cathartic crystal atone
for my blood-stained fingers upon the
pillows of the sea ;
for my summers that are lighter than laughter
are asmoke like words under the green traffic
and my wounds that are deep run into
the raftered sky—
my wounds that are lighter than laughter,
the thunder in the landscaped sky.

MEMORY OF ARNHEM

PETER RATAZZI

AND whilst we slogged the split road, dusty and pale
along the deserted hamlets and sleepy buttercup fields
I discovered my heart had travelled away for a while
to the blue coast of a wide romantic fairyland.

We saw battered steeples, the burnt windmill,
shadows of an old evacuated citadel.
A puppy dog, forgotten in never ending retreat, danced
merrily up to us but startled by our silence—
howled.

Metallic the threatening drone, the fright
in the warm spring air ; the thought : Is this defeat
in the West ?—and I never glanced even but walked on
and tired God only knew where . . .

From POEM FOR AUTUMN

C. BUSBY SMITH

Part IV

WHAT History says we may discount as lies ;
Hope needs no violent history to discover
The hope of grief, the grief of hope that flies
Into the past. There's nothing to recover.

What music teaches with caressing voice
Only a veil is, sheltering our eyes
From that cold vision, bidding us rejoice
Before the last false note crumples and dies.

What poetry with its calm and angry lines
Preaches upon the page we turn with love,
Is something hid, or something that declines
To answer what in truth it cannot prove.

Love also is at fault that wears the year
Silently like a glove on a white hand ;
It is the ripeness only that we always fear
At the last parting from the patient land.

NO PALING STARS

A. R. CURZON-HOWE

THERE are no paling stars in this dark sky of night,
There is no moon above the heathered hills ;
Only the wind, whispering ambiguous questions,
Only the rain, and under the rain,
The inborn shadow of fear.

Poet once, and dreamer too,
You shirked the vision of all former years,
You learned to scorn
The moorland moods of cloud and steel ;
You lost Christ's meaning of the word " forgive,"
And left unheard the April nightingales.
And yet, your eyes
Have not subdued the shadows of your soul.

Sometimes, you know, you should take stock,
Stand still . . . ponder reality . . .
And see
If you have ever really earned the right to live.

Right now, you are that great white Persian cat,
Basking (World without end Amen),
On weather-beaten bricks of sun.

WAR MEMORIAL 1914-18

PATRIC STEVENSON

I SOMEHOW knew how things would be when I went
To check its wording. Seen a month before—
With my mind half swept by the beer-brown river current
Just crossed on stepping stones—the parish war
Memorial left vague memories; yet a thought
Haunted me, were the names, the names which ought
To be together, separate? Officers one side,
Rankers on the other?
'To verify the point was worth a ride,'
I said, 'well worth a little sweat and bother
To see if death, the leveller, dared divide
In formal stone one soldier from another.'
And sure enough it was as I expected.
A bent and drab ex-serviceman was cutting
Grass in the graveyard where unresurrected
Bones lay buried. Bird droppings from jutting
Eave splattered tombstones; gamboge lichen, making
Protean patterns, encrusted faint inscriptions
Weathered by winter's frost and summer's baking
(So could one write conventional descriptions).
There stood the war memorial; either side
Were names, in front a lapidary sentence ran,
Do thou for England live, it read, and then
Assured the reader, *We for England died.*
On right the officers, on left the men
Kept ever, as in life, their separate groove;
No alphabetic order tried to prove
The fundamental brotherhood of man
With hypocritical attempt to save
The face of class distinctions in the grave.

And then the mower, resting on his scythe,
'They'll need a bigger one this time, they ought'
I made some futile answer; feudal tithe
And custom petrified me, tongue and breath,
In outward acquiescence; yet I thought
Of Saul and Jonathan—lives lovely and pleasant
(Swifter than eagles) not divided in death.
The sudden startled chortle of a breeding pheasant
Broke through the wood. From sordid Nissen huts
A captain cursed a private's 'bloody guts,'
And faintly over preserved waters came
Screech of privilege's reel, perennially the same.

CREDO

KEN ETHERIDGE

WE DO not blame the hungry man
Who wants to eat and drink;
Poetry feeds the living brain
And singing as we think.

With words for stones we build again
Babylon and Nineveh and Tyre,
And Helen's beauty burns in men
More true than Trojan fire.

We do not flaunt the withered rose;
We do not raise the dead;
But salve the sinking souls of those
Whom Beauty bought and bled.

Poetry, ornament of mind,
Still lifts man from the beast;
Ears to the deaf; eyes to the blind,
The wine that makes the feast.

To reach in heaven's citadel
The deathless angel throng,
We brave old chaos black as hell
And build a bridge of song.

ALLEGORY

ANTONY BORROW

HE FOUND the archway, and the long
Peculiar stairpath twisting up the hill
To where the ogre's painted turrets stood.
The leper on the bridge who pouched his alms
Had not become the fairy with rewards
For his small gold ; and at the gate
The mastiff was not fully reassured
His cause was just ; nor did the door
Fall open to his wand as promised.

But the strange monster he had come to slay
Came to him wearily, with eyes of pain,
Seeming no blacker than a mirror's leer
Whose tired brow was wrinkled with the same
Slow sorrow's passage that had etched his own.

And the princess, when rescued, showed no joy ;
Was not the smooth white tender gracious girl
The book foretold ; nor was he, at the end,
Entirely certain who had played the knight.

REVOLUTION

WILFRED H. BARTLETT

LOW Voice that hovers
Around the imprisoned candle
Whipping to a frenzy
The musty garret breath,

Whose whisper echoes harshly
In the unfertile valley
Where the river flows clean
And the silence is death,

Linger by the garden
Where the velvet perfumes mingle,
Carry a dewed stillness
To the trembling grey town ;

Creeping through shadow
Pause in the cold room,
And on the burning heart
Drop tenderly down.

DEPARTURE

HARDIMAN SCOTT

AS WE turn from the burning world,
Even the flames accuse, lighting
Our strained indifferent faces,
And the voices of the dying,
That speak from suppurating wounds.
Accuse and call, like the lost sounds
Of sea shells stranded on a shore,
Call for the healing touch of hands.

And it is not the memory
Only of each Carthage falling,
For our indifference is not
Cruelty, but the end of hopes
That lay like bad fruit on the ground,
Soured in the mouths of the dying,
And the sight of healers poisoned
By the prevalence of disease.

Let us leave with accusations
Echoing like their battle cries;
Leave and travel inwards, with eyes
Searching the old convolvulus
Of mind, and learn our floral growth;
Leave and know the metaphysic
Of, my dearest, our sympathy,
And purpose test in entropy.

NOTICES

IN ORDER to reflect the most significant trends in contemporary poetry, OUTPOSTS (a pamphlet anthology issued at irregular intervals) will continue to provide an open platform, entirely free from the restrictive influence of schools and cliques; and the only standard we shall impose will be that of quality.

We are concerned not only with the publication of outstanding poetry at a reasonable price, but also in assembling those poets, recognised and unrecognised, who, by reason of the particular outposts they occupy, are able to visualise the dangers and opportunities which confront the individual and the whole of humanity, now and in the future. In so far as these objects are achieved, OUTPOSTS will perform a vital public service.

OUTPOSTS made its first appearance in February, 1944, and each subsequent issue has shown some improvement in format. Its future development depends upon the support we receive, and we ask all readers to co-operate with us in making it widely known.

Contributions are invited; all MSS (which must be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope) will receive equal consideration whatever the form.

Subscriptions (4/4*d.* to cover four consecutive issues: single copies 1/1*d.* post free) should be sent to Howard Sergeant, 59 Orchard Avenue, Squires Gate, Blackpool. Advertisement rates will be quoted on enquiry.

Acknowledgement is due to the Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* for permission to reprint the poem *Riding the Soft Contours . . .*

MUSIC AND POETRY

Opportunity is provided for the appreciation of music and poetry under exceptionally favourable conditions at the Ethical Church Hall, 4A Inverness Place, Queen's Way, Bayswater. Tea 6 p.m.; Meeting 6.45 p.m. Programmes are being arranged for March 19th, April 16th, and May 14th. All are welcome.

Poets desiring to read their work should apply to Alec Craig, Oakwood Road Bricket Wood, St. Albans.

NORTHERN POETS

Contributions are invited for inclusion in a collection of poems intended to be representative of the north of England. All MSS submitted must be accompanied by a covering stamp if their return is desired, and should be sent to: Howard Sergeant, 59 Orchard Avenue, Squire's Gate, Blackpool.

PRESS COMMENTS on No. 3

" OUTPOSTS is a publication lively, intelligent, and worthy of support."
B. IFOR EVANS (*The Observer*)

" Norman Nicholson's *Caedmon* is worth the gate-money, and there are other good things and many new names." *Time and Tide*

" Whatever the individual merits of the four publications under review, the effect of their combined tone is that of an annunciation bright for the future of poetry . . . I think that OUTPOSTS deserves support. Although the poems are few, reading them one is conscious of a mellow music springing from a sincere spirituality, a glow from the heart. One walks, as it were, in ' the company of Heaven.' The themes are at the same time human, whether it be child addressing parents as in *Out Of This Chaos* by Raymond Tong, or father brooding over son in *The Simple Flame* by Robin Atthill, or in the detail of a fine poem *Caedmon* by Norman Nicholson. In most of these seventeen poems ' the simple flame burns bright.' " *The Fortnightly*

" OUTPOSTS has just brought out its third number—a brave venture in these days when paper is as precious as fine vellum. There is no poetry, writes one of the contributors, unless it be framed in our hearts as well as in words on a printed page. In that statement Mr. Joseph Braddock goes to the root of the matter . . . We look forward to future numbers."
ALBERTA VICKRIDGE (*Yorkshire Observer*)

" As to moderns, the best I can do is to give a few extracts from recent books and collections for review that I would recommend ; a description by William Hutcheson of either Elizabethan buccaneers or industrial merchants from OUTPOSTS, a collection of young poets in no particular literary set . . . " JOHN BETJEMAN (*Daily Herald*)

" OUTPOSTS is certainly of high standard." *Bristol Evening World*

" Raymond Tong's *Out of This Chaos*, William Hutcheson's *Pioneers*, Maurice Lindsay's *Lost Father, Lost Child*, and Norman Nicholson's *Caedmon* deserve mention, and generally there is a reaching out to new life in the verse." *Times Literary Supplement*

" OUTPOSTS has so far proved itself to be the least phoney and least cliquish of the small poetry magazines ; in this issue it is a particular pleasure to read the poems by Norman Nicholson, Emanuel Litvinoff and Margery Smith." MARGARET CROSLAND (*Tribune*)

" There are several new voices in OUTPOSTS which I hope to hear again." DENYS (*Manchester Evening Chronicle*)

" The best poems are by familiar names, Litvinoff, Norman Nicholson, and Maurice Lindsay, but W. J. Harvey may be worth watching."
JOHN ATKINS (*Our Time*)